UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General reports numerous atrocities committed around Srebrenica, Zepa, Banja Luka and Sanski Most earlier in year; says international community must not allow such acts to go unpunished.

* Secretary-General concludes visit to Ghana; has meetings with President of Sierra Leone in Freetown and Liberian Council of State in Monrovia.

* General Assembly President, in address on Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People, says progress has been made in Middle East peace process despite delays and acts of violence.

* General Assembly discusses report of Security Council; speakers say informal mechanisms designed to enhance openness should be institutionalized.

* Administrative and Budgetary Committee considers reports of Joint Inspection Unit and administrative and budgetary aspects of peace-keeping financing.

* UNAIDS and DPI to co-sponsor panel discussion at Headquarters on Friday in observance of World AIDS Day.

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There is undeniable evidence that summary executions, rape, mass expulsions and large-scale disappearances occurred around Srebrenica, Zepa, Banja Luka and Sanski Most earlier this year, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a report issued today, he said international humanitarian law had been consistently violated after the enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa fell to Bosnian Serb forces in July. Serb soldiers had executed an unknown number of Bosnian Muslim men, and General Ratko Mladic had reportedly been present at one site where killings had taken place.

The full horror of the atrocities had yet to be revealed, he continued. United Nations and other international organizations must have access to the areas in question. The international community should insist that the Bosnian Serb leadership cooperate fully with all relevant international mechanisms so

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that the events might be thoroughly investigated and the truth established. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia must have the ability to perform the task for which it had been created.

"The moral responsibility of the international community is heavy indeed," the Secretary-General concluded. "The world surely must not allow such acts to go unpunished, wherever and by whoever they are committed. If it does, these and similar crimes will happen again."

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The Secretary-General this morning concluded his official visit to Ghana, and then paid an official visit to Sierra Leone. After arriving in Freetown, he had a meeting with President Valentine Strasser. President Strasser said that his Government had the support of the people for a democratic system and for the elections to be held next February. Mr. Boutros-Ghali said that his visit should be seen in the context of the renewed international interest in peace and democracy in Sierra Leone. He hoped that it would lead to increased international support for the process of democratization.

At noon, the Secretary-General left Sierra Leone for Liberia. He visited the headquarters of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) in Monrovia and addressed the staff, and later met with the Council of State of the Liberian National Transitional Government. He was scheduled to leave for Cotonou, Benin, at the end of the day.

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Progress has been made in the peace process on the question of Palestine despite delays and acts of violence, including the tragic assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, General Assembly President Diogo Freitas do Amaral (Portugal) said today. In a statement on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, he urged the parties -- Israel and the Palestinians -- to continue to display the necessary political will and good faith to bring the peace process to full fruition.

The Assembly President said it would be tragic if a resurgence of violence were to jeopardize the peace process. The United Nations should continue to play a role in mobilizing the needed assistance in order to establish solid foundations for peace. It should also promote the dialogue and confidence-building measures necessary to dissipate the hostility and mistrust which continued to alienate the peoples of the region. The Organization must continue to promote, in the interest of world peace and security, the peace process between all parties to the conflict, he stressed.

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The Security Council's efforts to make its work more transparent were welcomed today during debate on the Council's report to the General Assembly. However, many speakers urged that informal mechanisms designed to enhance openness be institutionalized.

Speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the representative of Colombia welcomed the informal information meetings carried out by the Presidency on the current work of the Council. He expressed the hope that such meetings would be a regular feature, rather than left to the decision of the monthly President.

"The Security Council must not become a body whose decisions, which affect all of us, are adopted behind closed doors under almost clandestine conditions," said the representative of Mexico. He called for a formalization of the mechanism for consultations between the Council and troop-contributing States, emphasizing that those countries were placing their soldiers at risk and were very interested in decisions which could affect them.

The representative of Belgium joined in calling for greater consultation with troop-contributing countries. He stated that the experience of the contributors could help the Council to formulate mandates and adapt them to evolving situations.

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The General Assembly should review the current formula for financing the support account of peace-keeping operations in order to provide enough resources for essential backstopping tasks in 1996, the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) was told yesterday. That suggestion was made by United Nations Controller Yukio Takasu, as the Committee began considering reports of Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and administrative and budgetary aspects of peace-keeping financing.

With changes expected in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), incomes for the support account in 1996 would be half the 1995 amounts, he said. Therefore, the number of staff funded from that account would be reduced drastically.

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The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Department of Public Information (DPI) will co-sponsor a panel discussion at Headquarters on 1 December in observance of World AIDS Day. The discussion will open with a statement by General Assembly President Diogo Freitas do Amaral, and a videotaped message from Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The theme for this year's AIDS Day observance, "Shared rights, shared responsibilities", was chosen in recognition of 1995 as the International Year of Tolerance. The co-sponsors hope that this will highlight the need for all people -- whether infected with HIV or not -- to protect the rights of those infected and to accept responsibility for prevention and care if AIDS is to be confronted successfully.

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